

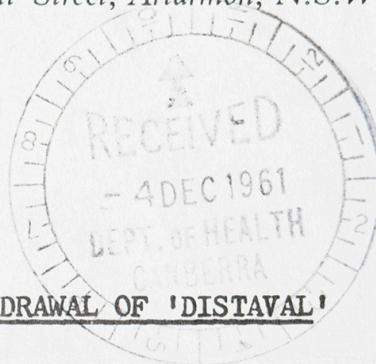
THE DISTILLERS COMPANY BIOCHEMICALS
(AUSTRALIA PTY) LIMITED

Campbell Street, Artarmon, N.S.W.

OUR REF:

YOUR REF:

29th November, 1961.



WS
WITHDRAWAL OF 'DISTAVAL'

Dear Doctor,

We reproduce below the text of a letter which has been sent to medical and pharmaceutical journals published in Australia.

"During the past week The Distillers Company (Biochemicals) Limited London, have received reports from two overseas sources which may associate Thalidomide with harmful effects on the foetus in early pregnancy.

Although the evidence on which these reports are based is circumstantial (there have been no reports arising in Great Britain, either chemically or pharmacologically) The Distillers Company (Biochemicals) Limited feel that, pending further investigation, they have no alternative but to withdraw 'Distaval' from the market. They are also withdrawing other products which contain Thalidomide, namely 'Valgis', 'Tensival' and 'Valgraine'. Meanwhile, they are continuing to carry on pharmacological and other studies of their own, to make every endeavour to learn the truth about this development

As a result of this decision, 'Distaval' and other products containing Thalidomide are now being withdrawn from sale in Australia and New Zealand."

Yours faithfully,

THE DISTILLERS COMPANY BIOCHEMICALS
(AUSTRALIA PTY.) LIMITED.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

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SUBJECT Thalidomide - Representations from Mr. Calwell

The Minister :

Mr. Calwell wrote to you on the 4th and 18th December on behalf of Miss Rennie Simmons, who recently published a booklet ("Warning to Women") in which she criticised the activities of the Department of Health following disclosure of the effects of thalidomide when taken by women during early pregnancy.

2. Despite some inaccuracies in her publication, a point she emphasizes and which may have some merit, is the inherent danger of supplies of left-over preparations containing thalidomide in household medicine chests. In her letters to Mr. Calwell, Miss Simmons again emphasizes this danger, and has suggested that you issue a press statement warning the public of the risks, and specifically mentioning the names of thalidomide preparations that were on sale in Australia until withdrawn by the manufacturers.

3. As you know, thalidomide preparations were withdrawn from sale over a year ago, and the subject appears to be no longer topical. This fact, coupled with the publicity that has been given to the side effects of thalidomide, should be sufficient reason for not resurrecting this subject. However, there possibly could be some households that still have these preparations in their medicine chests and are not aware of the inherent danger.

4. On the 10th December, the Melbourne "Herald" published your warning to householders to destroy supplies of thalidomide preparations in their possession, but so far as can be ascertained, your statement did not appear in interstate newspapers. If you consider that you should issue a further warning, a suggested press statement has been prepared and is attached for your consideration.

5. However, as you may feel that the subject is no longer topical and could re-awaken press publicity which could be possibly adverse, you might consider the issue of a press statement unwarranted at this stage. In this event, I have attached for your consideration a draft reply to Mr. Calwell embodying generally Commonwealth responsibilities in relation to the control of drugs, and action taken by the Commonwealth in regard to thalidomide.

Minister

I am of the opinion that a further press statement on "Thalidomide" would serve no useful purpose at present time.

Director General

3 - JAN 1963

B. W. Allen

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